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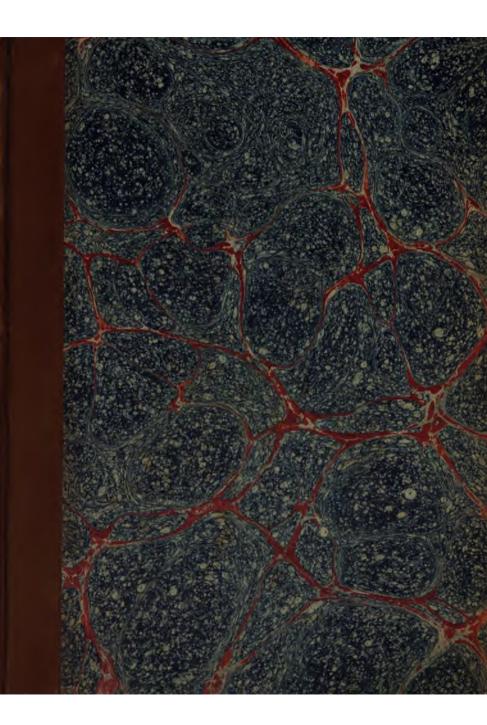
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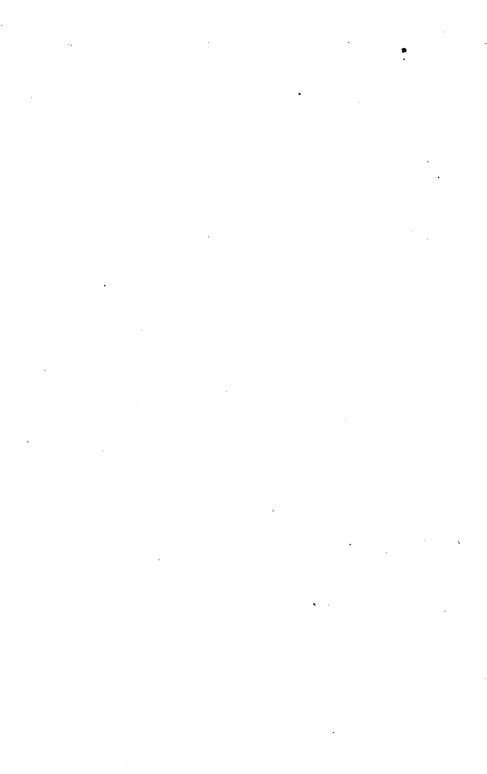
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49.711.







THE DUTY

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ENQUIRING AFTER GOD.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

THE PARISH CHURCH OF DEDDINGTON, OXON,

On Wednesday, the 26th day of September, 1849:

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD, FOR SOLEMN HUMILIATION, THROUGHOUT THE DIOCESE, ON ACCOUNT OF THE EXISTING PROTILENCE.

BY THE REV. JAMES BROGDEN, M.A., OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND VICAR OF DEDDINGTON.

Bublished by Request.

DEDDINGTON:

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1849.



THE HONOURABLE AND VERY REVEREND

THE DEAN OF WINDSOR,

THROUGH WHOSE KINDNESS

THE AUTHOR WAS PREFERRED

TO THE VICARAGE OF DEDDINGTON,

THIS SERMON

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH RESPECTFUL ESTEEM,

AND AFFECTIONATE REGARD.

DEDDINGTON,

16ти Остовев, 1849.



A SERMON.

LXXVIII PSALM, 34.

WHEN HE SLEW THEM, THEN THEY SOUGHT HIM: AND THEY RETURNED AND ENQUIRED EARLY AFTER GOD.

Gon's dealings with his chosen people, even from the time of their coming out of Egypt, to the days of David, are recorded in this beautiful Psalm. Hear my law, Oh my people, incline your ears unto the words of my mouth, commenced the history of God's covenant with the children of Israel, which he commanded them to teach their children, that they might put their trust in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. The sacred narrative proceeds to declare the marvellous things that he did in the sight of their forefathers; How He divided the sea, and let them go through. How in the day time He led them with a cloud, and all the night through with the light of fire. How He brought waters out of the stony rock, so that it gushed out like the rivers: yet for all this, They sinned yet more and more against Him, and put not their trust in His

<sup>Psalm lxxviii. 1. (the Prayer Book version.)
Psalm lxxviii. 5, 8.</sup>

help. How when they are angels' food, for He rained down manna upon them for to eat, that for all this they sinned yet more, and believed not His wondrous works. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity: and their years in trouble. When He slew them, they sought Him, and turned them early and enquired after God.

This, my brethren, is a sad record of a sinful nation: but it is not confined to them alone. Its application should reach ourselves: because we have been indulgently dealt with, and we have been as deeply ungrateful, for the manifold mercies and protecting Providence of Almighty God.

Threatened a short time ago, especially in a sister Island of this Empire, with famine; hearing among ourselves continually the strong cryings of the poor and needy; and blessed at present with a most abundant Harvest, what is our ingratitude? Why! it resembles that of those who did eat, and were well filled, but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God came upon them, and slew the wealthiest of them: yea, and smote down the chosen men that were in Israel.

Let us then endeavour to enquire into this particular ensample, written for our admonition, that when he slew them, they sought him, and turned them early, and enquired after God.

The fear of death, may reasonably claim, even among the blinded heathen, a seeking after God. We know, from St. Paul's record, that it did so; for although not blessed with the light of Revelation, the invisible things of God, from the creation of

c Psalm lxxviii. 13, 26. Exodus xiii. 21, 22.

d Psalm lxxviii. 33, 34.

e Psalm lxxviii. 30, 31.

f 1 Cor. 10, 11. Psalm lxxviii. 34.

the world, were discerned by them, in the contemplation of his glorious works, and in the enjoyment of those blessings and benefits, which then seemed so freely scattered over the universe, by the bountiful hand of nature.8 They could see clearly God's goodness at harvest time. They were reminded of His power when wind and storm fulfilled his word. There was nothing on earth. which they could pick up, that did not afford them gleanings of the Heavenly wisdom of a Divine Creator. There was nothing. in thought, which they could contrive, no temple or monument of human imaginations which they could erect, that was not subservient to the Master builder, and a bowing down, in adoration, before the Grand Architect of the Universe. For in Him, we live and move and have our being; and as certain also of their own poets have said, we are also His offspring.h therefore the Jews, when He slew them, sought Him; if blinded heathens turned them early and raised an Altar to the unknown God, what deep guilt do we incur, who own the name of Christ, and do yet, during an almost unexampled Pestilence, refrain from seeking the Throne of Mercy with strong crying and tears.k

Noah and his family, in the ark, were saved from perishing by water: and the same Almighty and Everlasting God led the children of Israel safely through the Red Sea, figuring thereby, the Christian Covenant, into which we are admitted, by Holy Baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Though fed by manna in the Wilderness, the Jews were never permitted to enjoy, at that time, in the Holy Communion," a much

s Romans i. 20. Cudworth's Intellectual System of the Universe, folio, 1778, p. 379—383. Enfield's History of Philosophy, vol. 1, p. 148—189.

h Acts xvii. 28.

¹ Acts xvii. 23.

¹ Matth. xxviii. 19.

^k Hebrews v. 7, xii. 17.

^m 1 Cor. x. 16.

more Heavenly and Spiritual food; the Body and Blood, Sacramentally taken, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Though God caused the east wind to blow under Heaven, and through His power he brought in the south-west wind, yet the sweet and refreshing gales of his Holy Spirit had not yet so widely diffused themselves in Christian Consolations, as on the day of Pentecost. Though he rained flesh, no cloven tongues, like as of fire, had as yet descended upon earth to proclaim the wonderful works of God." And the Holy Spirit had not then come down, in the likeness of a dove, saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. But still we have the record, for our admonition, as Christians, concerning blinded Heathens, and disobedient Jews; that when He slew them, they sought Him, and turned them early, and enquired after God. What a fearful contrast it will afford, and what a dreadful issue in the day of Judgment, if we shall be found, less humble, less repentant, less trustful, less earnestly prayerful, less feeling "after God," and finding "Him," than they; it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, at that day, than for ourselves. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying," "Because I have called, and ve refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Loan: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whose hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

First then, let us ever remember that to relieve the sorrows of nations or of individuals, no method is so dutiful or so prevailing as fervent prayer, for all human means are surpassed by the efficacy of a penitent's appeal to the Throne of mercy. Humbled under the mighty hand of God, minished and brought low, and calling out of the depths of his distress unto the Lord, he may say with truth, when I was weak then was I strong; when I was in trouble, I called upon the Lord and he heard me.

This is fully proved throughout all Holy Scripture, from the time that the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering even unto our own days.

But this fact is perhaps more conspicuously plain in the history of that rebellious people the Jews. God's punishments ever followed their sins," and His mercies were never withheld on their repentance." His blessings were richly showered down upon their faith and obedience," so that as in the case of Abraham, they

Butlers Analogy of Religion, part 1. chap. ii.—Bp. Taylor's Sermons.
 Sermon 1, on Christ's advent to judgment. London, folio, 1678, p. 3.

P James v. 16.

q Psalm cvii. 39.

Psalm cxxxi. 1.

¹¹ Cor. xii. 10.

Psalm vi. 9. Jonah xi. 2.

Genesis iv. 4.

Deut. iv. Numb. xxv. 4.
Deut. iv. 27—40.

[▼] Judges xiii. 24. lsaiah xxx. 17.

Deut. xxxii. Joshua xxiii. Genesis xxii. 17.

appear as numerous in Holy Scripture as the sands of the sea, or as the stars of Heaven.

Whether we take for instance the sins and repentance of David. and of the great city of Nineveh: the plagues which were stayed on the intercession of Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, and David: the idolatry and humiliation of the wicked king Ahab: the protection vouchsafed to the good kings Hezekiah and Josiah: the parable of the prodigal who arose and went unto his father: b the affectionate sorrow of her who washed our blessed Lord's feet with tears and wiped them with her hair: or even the penitence of the thief upon the cross: d-yet in all these cases we shall find the same result recorded, and as arising from the same cause. They had each taken the right and only means, appointed by Divine command, for obtaining mercy. They believed in the assurances of the Holy Psalmist that the sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit. They obeyed God's voice as revealed by the Prophet Joel. Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. They felt as Jonah did in humiliation and prayer, when my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came

z 2 Samuel xii.

Jonah iii. 10.

____ xxv. 7—13. 2 Samuel xxiv. 15—25.

² 1 Kings xxi. 29.

^{*} Isaiah xxxvi. 37, 38.

² Kings xviii. xix. xxi.

b Luke xv. 11—32.
 c Luke vii. 36—49.

d Luke xxiii. 39-43.

e Psalm li. 17.

f Joel ii. 12-17.

in unto Thee into Thy Holy Temple.8

These are a few convincing reasons, my Brethren, taken out of Holy Scripture, to prove to you, why we ought, humbly, to assemble ourselves together, and pray to God this day.

Remember, I beseech you, not only the duty of diligent prayer, and the conditions of a prevailing prayer; but also the return of mercy, which may be hoped for, after that Holy exercise, during the dreadful Pestilence with which this country is now visited.

For if we follow the example, recorded in the words of the Text, of those, who when He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and enquired early after God; we have these comfortable words of Holv Scripture, suited to this occasion, for admonition and support:-" Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shall glorify me. They shall call upon my Name, and I will hear them, I will say it is my people, and they shall say the Lord is my God. Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me: I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and Holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite ones, for I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth." Who is a God like unto Thee,

g Jonah ii. 7.

Bp. Taylor's Sermons. Sermon 4, 5, 6. London, folio, 1678, p. 25—46.
 Psalm I. 15.
 2 Kings xxii. 19.

E Zechariah xiii. 9. Isaiah xxxviii. 5. Isaiah lvii. 15, 16.

that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever. because He delighteth in mercy.º Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

From this recital of events, connected with the Text, we learn, the true cause of all man's trouble; that it consists in sin and unbelief:-the fittest method for him to endeavour to avert Divine punishment—Repentance, Faith, Prayer, reading of God's Word. and use of Holy Sacraments: as well as the only source of relief to which he can in affliction, with hope, ever faithfully apply the Omnipotence of God, revealed to him in mercy.

These grounds of Consolation have been more fully traced out, and enlarged upon by me, because I ought, at this time especially, to endeavour to build upon a right foundation; and when we are all of us so mournfully called upon to take heed to our ways, to set our houses in order, and apply our hearts unto wisdom: q it is my duty to fix, if possible, your repentance and faith, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, not upon the perishable sand of mere worldly thoughts and wishes, but upon a stedfast and serious remembrance, that God is your Rock, and the High God your REDEEMER: upon firm reliance on the sole merits of a Holy and merciful Saviour, who has purchased our redemption by the inestimable price of His incorruptible Blood.

Warnings of God's power, are generally, if attended to, the harbingers of His goodness and compassion, for whom the Lord

o Micah vii. 18. P Hosea xii. 16.

⁹ Psalm xc. 12.

loveth. He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. While a heedless neglect of His manifold blessings, ends as usually, in their being withdrawn.

While we depend upon ourselves; while we think that the skill of the man of science may free us from all difficulties; or the sanctity of the devotee may claim superior merit as worthy of all praise and honour, and of its own reward; some may take pride, in what is called an enlightened age; and some may thank God, with Pharisaical self-assurance, that they are not as other men are.' But when we trust thoroughly in God, and acknowledge as we ought, our own feebleness and sin, then it is, and then ALONE, that we shall be in a right condition to feel the value of His corrections, and the blessings of His mercies: then we shall be bearing forth precious seed, when though going on our way weeping, we acknowledge that God is all in all; we shall reap in joy, and experience how gracious the Lord is, for His eyes are over the righteous: and His ears are open unto their prayers." We shall find that our submission to the Divine will, in time of trouble, has brought forth fruits meet for repentance; so that strengthened, and purified, by Heavenly influences, what was sown, a natural body, has been raised a Spiritual body.

But remember, I beseech you, the example proposed for our guidance, when He slew them, they sought Him, and turned them early, and enquired after God. All you see must turn early, all are to enquire after God. There can be no exemption, no plea to excuse diversion or division, in this case; for the Divine Wisdom

r Hebrews xii. 6.

Deut. iv. vi. viii. xi. xxviii. xxix. xxx.

l Kings xvii. Jeremiah xxv.

Ezekiel xx. xxxyi.

t Luke xviii. 11.

² Psalm xxxiv. 15.

^{7 1} Cor. xv. 44.

has so ordered the course of human events, that the strong depends upon the weak, as much as the weak does on the strong: the rich is assisted by the poor, as the poor is by the rich: the wise is aided by the ignorant, as the ignorant by the wise: however divided into classes, or separated by seeming interests in life, or alienated by animosities, or estranged from that Christian love, which ought to exist, but which too often, unhappily waxes cold, through discordance in religious opinions: We have now a call for unity, in human suffering, from which none are exempt: from which it is impossible for any to escape, and which, it is to be hoped, may have a Spiritual influence to give us grace seriously to lay to heart, the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions: that as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be of one heart, and of one soul, united in one Holy Bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth, glorify the Author and Giver of all good things, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But it is not alone, during the time of trouble, that we should seek after God, we should turn to Him and seek after Him, at ALL times, and in ALL ways, throughout every period of existence, from the cradle to the grave. And what guidance can we have for this search after God, so sure, as HOLY SCRIPTURE; and those truthloving, enlightening, and consoling religious ordinances and devout prayers, so carefully provided for our comfort, and growth in grace, by our Spiritual Mother, the Church of England?—She teaches us to turn to Him early, in the Sacrament of Infant Baptism, from "the world, the flesh and the Devil," that we may be received into Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and "being stedfast in faith,

joyful through Hope, and rooted in Charity, we may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally we may come to the land of everlasting life." She exhorts us, never to neglect, our covenanted obligations, but to remember always, throughout our lives, that "Baptism doth represent unto us, our profession, which is to follow the EXAMPLE of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him, that as He died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." She trains us up in ways of practical piety; of habitual holiness; and daily Only consider the full brevity; the deep plainness; the comely simplicity of expression, which runs through the whole contexture of Her venerable forms of Prayer:-How exact they are: and vet how comprehensive: how so judiciously contrived. that "the wisest may exercise at once, their knowledge and devotion; while the most ignorant may pray with the understanding." For "Prayer is the peace of our spirit; it is the stillness of our thoughts; the evenness of recollection; the seat of meditation; the rest of our cares, and the calm of our Tempest." "It is the issue of a quiet mind-of untroubled thoughts. Prayer is the daughter of Charity, and the sister of Meekness; it is an action of likeness to the Holy Ghost; it is an imitation of the Holy Jesus, and a conformity to God."*

Through the Prayers of our Church, we have hope, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; that we may continue the children of God for ever, "and daily increase in His Holy Spirit more and more until we come to His everlasting Kingdom."

^{*} Comber's Works, folio, 1701. The preface, p. 4.—Bp, Taylor's Sermons.

And above all we are exhorted to pray in "the susceptation and communication of the Holy Sacrament;" and never to allow, as too many do, the cares of the world, and the engagements of our riper years to lead us astray, from Holy Communion, when so lovingly called and bidden by God Himself; for this is not turning to, but turning away from, God, in not shewing the Lord's death till He come.

Remember the fate of those, who refused the Feast in the Gospel; because they had bought a farm, or would try their vokes of oxen. or because they were married. Little indeed did their feigned excuses avail before God; they were counted unworthy of the Heavenly Feast: and the same sore punishment may still hang over those, who wilfully abstain from the Lord's Table. When can our prayers be more Holy, than when they commemorate "the Sacrifice of the death of Christ, and the Benefits which we receive thereby;"s for Christ by that Sacrifice reconciled God and the world. There we are, after a secret and mysterious manner, made one with Christ; there we enjoy the comfortable words of our Saviour, for the consolation of all, who truly turn to Him, Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, and although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer any sacrifice, yet we are permitted, if we "truly and earnestly repent us of our sins; and are in love and charity with our neighbours;" to beseech God, to accept "our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I have thus endeavoured to explain, how we may seek, and how we ought to seek, after God, at ALL times:—by Repentance,

Faith, and Obedience:—by Christian Hope and fervent Charity among ourselves; -and by turning to Him, for help, in time of need, as the "Lord of all Power and Might." By diligent study of His Holy Word; -- by earnest, heartfelt prayer; -- by the right use of Holy Sacraments, ordained by Christ Himself; for they are "effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him." By steadfast adherence to all the ordinances of that pure and Apostolical Branch of the Universal Church—the Church of England. And that, especially, in the dark seasons of affliction, we may hope from the record of Scripture History, that God will, as heretofore, declare His "Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity," towards all who truly turn to Him: so that those, who take refuge in the SANCTUARY, to approach the Mercy Seat; who, sanctify the congregation, and gather the children, and those that suck the breasts of their Spiritual Mother; will be protected by Divine Providence:—and trusting, with the faith of Abraham, in the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant; will, like Noah, remain safe in the ARK, unharmed, nay even spiritually warned and improved, by the desolation which now ravages around them.

Let us then, while our danger constrains us, cry mightily unto God.^d Let small and great stand in awe of Him,^e and endeavour to avoid the fury of His wrath. Let us fly to the mercy seat, while we may have access to it; and cleave steadfastly to the Holy Place, till we obtain forgiveness. Let us be seech the Holy Jesus to wash us in His precious Blood, and offer up the incense of our imperfect prayers. Let us be seech him to look down, with

b Article xxv. c Joel ii. 16. d Jonah iii. 8. e Psalm xxxiii. 8.

Pity and Compassion, on our afflicted Brethren, and take away His plague from them, before they are consumed by means of His heavy Hand.

Let their troubles, be ever in our sight, and their calamities, be considered as an earnest of our own: and let the united voices of the whole Nation cry mightily to God, for His patience and forbearance. Hear our Prayers O Lord; Hold not Thy peace at our tears. Lord what is our hope? Truly our hope is even in Thee.⁵ "Father, if it be Thy good pleasure; let this cup pass from us: nevertheless not as we will but as Thou wilt." "But O Lord most Holy: O God most Mighty, O Holy and merciful Saviour; Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee: deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death." Spare us, Good Lord, spare Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious Blood, and be not angry with us for ever.

Enter not into judgment with Thy Servants, who are vile Earth, and miserable sinners; but so turn Thine anger from us, who meekly acknowledge our vileness, and truly repent us of our faults, and so make haste to help us in this world, that we may ever live with Thee in the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

f Psalm xxxix. 11. g Psalm xxxix. 8—13. h Matt. xxvi. 39.

i The Order for the Burial of the Dead.

 $^{^{\}mathbf{k}}$ A Commination to be used on the first day of Lent, and at other times as the Ordinary shall appoint.







